

HS 2020 – M.A. Seminar  
**Reading Literary and Critical Theory**  
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen  
*Thursdays 16.15 – 18.00*

This is the obligatory theory course for MA students in focusing on literature; it is not mandatory for students focusing on linguistics. This course is taught online with classroom elements. Please note that all participants are expected to have read Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP, 2000) by the beginning of term. Texts marked with an \* will be posted on OLAT.

(1) Sept 17 Meet & Greet: introductions & course organization.

**CULTURE**

(2) Sept 24 **Friedrich Nietzsche**, excerpts from *On the Genealogy of Morality* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*)\* & **Michel Foucault**, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”\*

(3) Oct 1 **Walter Benjamin**, “The Task of the Translator” (“Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”)\* & “On the Concept of History” (“Über den Begriff der Geschichte”)\*

(4) Oct 8 **Sigmund Freud**, *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*)

**GENDER**

(5) Oct 15 **Virginia Woolf**, *A Room of One's Own*

(6) Oct 22 **Julia Kristeva**, *Power of Horror*, “Approaching Abjection”\*

(7) Oct 29 **Judith Butler**, *Bodies that Matter*, “Introduction”\*

(8) Nov 5 **Donna Haraway**, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, “Tentacular Thinking. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene”\*

**POWER**

(9) Nov 12 **Toni Morrison**, *Playing in the Dark*

(10) Nov 19 **Shoshana Felman**, *The Juridical Unconscious. Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*, “Introduction”, “Forms of Judicial Blindness, or the Evidence of What Cannot Be Seen”\*

(11) Nov 26 SPECIAL SESSION: How to Write the Seminar Paper  
Prepare a thesis for this session; you can always adjust the topic for the final paper.

(12) Dec 3 No class.

(13) Dec 10 **Roland Barthes**, “Myth Today”\*

(14) Dec 17 **Michel Foucault**, *Society Must Be Defended*, Chapter 3\*  
**Friedrich Nietzsche**, “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense” (“Über Wahrheit und Lüge im Aussermoralischen Sinn”)\*

## *Recommended Reading*

Bennett, Andrew and Nicholas Royle. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Fourth Edition. Routledge, 2014.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd Revised Edition, Anniversary Edition. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Leitch, Vincent B, William E. Can, Laurie A. Finke (eds.). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Norton and Company, 2018.

Malpas, Simon and Paul Wake (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory*. Routledge, 2006.

## *Course Requirements*

### *Thesis Papers*

All students should prepare **a preliminary discussion for 10 of the seminar sessions** (400 words), to be posted on OLAT by 9 a.m. on Wednesday of the respective week. This should entail a thesis, but could also contain a series of questions, comments or associations. It should present an argument; indeed, help you practice your skills at argumentation. At the same time, it will facilitate class discussion and allow us to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for each session. Please note that the thesis you will prepare for the “How to Write the Seminar Paper” session does not count towards the total number of thesis papers.

### *Theory Summaries*

All students must also compile a detailed summary of a text for one of the class sessions (to be determined at the beginning of the course) that presents the key concepts and arguments of the text. Please send it as a PDF to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi ([morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch](mailto:morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch)) **one week** after the respective session **at the latest**. The summaries will be uploaded to OLAT.

### *Essay*

All students should hand in an essay (4000-5000 words):

- The essay should discuss at least one of the theoretical texts from the seminar program but could involve a comparison of several theoretical texts discussed.
- A starting point for the development of your essay topic may be a theme, a particular concern, or an overarching question linking several texts.
- Your essay must include a thesis statement and develop a coherent argument like any other literary essay. It can (but does not have to) include a critical reading of a literary text based on one or more theoretical texts.
- You are expected to do thorough research on your theoretical texts.
- Please discuss your essay either with Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen or with one of her assistants in advance of writing it.
- The deadline for handing in your essay is **March 1, 2021**. Please send a PDF version of the paper (incl. the *Selbstständigkeitserklärung*) via e-mail to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi ([morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch](mailto:morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch)).

Plagiarism is a serious offence and pertains to all assignments.

## **Tutorial**

The tutorial is taught by Nastacia Schmolli starting in the second week of term via Zoom (details will be communicated via email).